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Speaker: Pastor Tyler Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Ephesians 1:15-23
Title of Sermon: Awakened Hearts

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^{of} of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

A number of weeks ago I was at a barbecue with a bunch of friends, and one of my friends asked me; she said, "What is, in your opinion, the biggest problem facing Christians right now? So, in the coming generation, what are some of the biggest hurdles that they face?" And I didn't need to think about it, because I've been in young adult ministry long enough, and just in the church long enough, you start to see where the church is starting to hurt. And I said, "Two things -- our culture is going to have a problem with biblical illiteracy and spiritual understanding."

Now, I had just known that from my own experience -- and I'm not dogging on our church. This isn't just our church's problem -- this is the church's problem. And so, I started to look up some numbers, because I wanted to be able to back up what I was thinking. And so, I found this survey from Lifeway Research -- they did this about four years ago, but I would imagine that it's either the same if not worse today. They went to a bunch of churches and they asked the congregants, "How often are you reading your Bible?" Here were their answers: Nineteen percent of the people said, "I read my Bible every day." You say, "Good job." Twenty-six percent of the people surveyed said, "I read it a few times a week." And then 14 percent of the people said, "Once a week." Twenty-two percent of those surveyed said, "Maybe once a month." And then, 18 percent of the people surveyed said, "Rarely or never." So, I would argue that that is the state of the church at large -- at least in America. We've got two problems. One is biblical illiteracy. There's just not enough time spent in the Word. But really, I would argue that that's not our biggest problem. And I'm gonna argue that from what Paul says, so, to jump into our story, Paul is writing the letter of Ephesians to a group of Christians, churches specifically in Ephesus, and he begins very positively. It's a deeply encouraging letter. And he says -- before he starts praying, he says, "I wasn't even around you, and I started hearing stories of your faith. Your trust in the Lord is absolutely incredible. Well done. I'm proud of you."

The second thing that he says is, "I heard about your love for people -- the way that you're sacrificing, the way that you're meeting the needs of those in and outside the church is absolutely incredible. Well done." Before he even says that, he begins the letter of Ephesians by saying, "Should you become a Christian, here are the lists of spiritual blessings that are included in this relationship that you now have with Jesus." And he started talking about Heaven, our inheritance with God and eternal life, and he started talking about the Holy Spirit's working in you -- so he just lists all of these things. But then, he ends it, I would argue, in a rather weird way. He says, "For this reason, I'm going to pray for you." So, why would Paul say, "I'm gonna give you a list of all the things you get when you become a Christian, and also, I'm gonna need to pray that you would actually understand it"? See, here's Paul's fear, and this is, I think, something that we need to take very seriously. Your pursuit of holiness is not simply an intellectual endeavor. Your reading of Scripture is not an intellectual endeavor only -- it is a spiritual exercise. And the only way for you and me to do it rightly is to invite the Holy Spirit into this work and say, "Lord, would you teach me? Because, I can understand what I just read, but if I'm really gonna apply this well, I'm gonna need your help."

And so, Paul looks at this church just like I would look at you -- unbelievably grateful to be a part of it, and very proud of the things that we've done. I mean, we just had two camps where we got to preach Jesus to almost 500 kids for two weeks in a row! It was absolutely incredible. Like, well done, church! That was all of us. So, I'm -- this is not in a spirit of condemnation, and I don't think Paul's was either, but he's like -- "If you're gonna pursue intimacy with the Lord, I wanna teach you how to do this." So, if you've ever wondered, how do I as a fallen human being converse with and build relationship with an omniscient God? Welcome to the story. And so, Paul begins this prayer, and he says that, "I'm praying this because I'm gonna give you this list of spiritual blessings, but you can't just read it. You need to pray that the Lord would show you how to implement this in your life." And so, he says, "I keep asking." So, this is repeated. So, I don't care if you're 17 or 70, this applies to the life of the believer. "I continually ask that the Lord Jesus, our glorious Father, may give you a spirit" -- or you can read, an attitude -- "that he would give you an attitude of wisdom and revelation." Why? "So that you would know God better.

Here's the purpose of this prayer -- that me and you would grow in intimacy, grow in holiness, grow in understanding of the Lord, and this is why he's praying. Wisdom and revelation. Let's just touch on those two. We're going to touch on kind of the beginning of the prayer and then I'll show you the application. What is wisdom, and what is revelation, and why does Paul want to pray it for you? Well, let's start with wisdom. What is that? That is the right application of what is already known. Wisdom is to perceive rightly what you see in the world. That is wisdom. Revelation is different. That is to discover what previously was unknown to you. So, to the believer, to the person who already loves Jesus, hopefully most people in this room -- and if you're not a believer tonight, I pray that you would just enjoy what God would have for you should you make that decision. But honestly, this sermon is dominantly to the believer. Even if you're doing really, really well, how do you grow in intimacy with the Lord? What do you do when you combine wisdom and revelation? What is the heart of this prayer? It's a curiosity of the divine. It's -- when you look at the Lord, what do you see, and should you see good things, should you read amazing things in Scripture, how do you apply that to your life with any form of consistency? How do you look rightly at Scripture and then look rightly at your life? This is a curiosity of the divine. It's growth.

John Stott once said, "Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness." Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness. And so, as Paul begins this prayer, he says, "Here's what I want for you, that you would be divinely curious so that it would lead you to three things." So, as he prays this prayer, there are three things that you need the Holy Spirit's help to better understand. So, let's just line these out. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened, that you would take all this into your innermost being" -- and here's the three things -- "in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, know the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparably great power for those of us who believe."

So, let's break all of those down. Here's your first one. Here's what he wants you in prayer to understand. The hope to which He has called you. What is your hope, Christian? What is your hope? Hope, simply defined, is an expectation of a certain outcome. Hope is an expectation of a certain outcome, usually a positive thing. So, to you, the believer, what is your hope? In Peter chapter 3, Peter says, "Be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have in Christ Jesus." Be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 1 -- Paul says that, "We continually remember you in our prayers and remember your endurance inspired by your hope in Jesus." So, what is he calling you to first identify? He's saying, "I need you to look back at the moment that Jesus saved you. I need you to look." If you read the beginning of Ephesians, he says, "From eternity past, God thought of you and was orchestrating a plan to bring you into relationship with himself." Here's what I want you to understand, believer -- that you would understand and better appreciate everything God did to bring you into relationship with Himself. You are simply asked in prayer to better understand your story. So, what's your story? What mountains did God need to move for you to see Him better? What things did God orchestrate in your life, whether it was your parents, maybe your kids were the reason that you came to faith -- because you were like, "Well, my kid kinda needs church, and -- 'cause there's good morals there" -- but then, through that, God brought you into relationship.

Or, maybe your story's like mine. It wasn't so much an obstacle God moved out of the way -- it was a blessing that He gave me that I had nothing to do with. When I start looking at my story, I see Mark and Kari Hanke, two people that I have done nothing to deserve. Nothing to deserve. I don't deserve a dad that loves my mom and has stayed in marriage even when it's difficult. I don't deserve a mom and a dad -- a mom who prays for me regularly -- not just me personally, but my ministry. I don't deserve a dad that continually, year after year after year, seems to oddly grow in his affection for the local church, not lose it. I didn't do anything to deserve them. Now for you, even hearing that story might make you upset, because you're like, "Well Tyler, I wasn't given that blessing. My parents were cruel. My parents wanted nothing to do with the church." But before you let your heart take you on a journey of what you didn't have, what was the prayer? That you would better understand the hope of Jesus in your life. What is your story, and what did God do to bring you into relationship with Himself?

Here's what I was telling the high-schoolers all week long at H2O -- "I don't care what's going on at home. You want to know what's cool, friends, is that somehow, God got you here, in front of me, and I get to preach Jesus to you for five straight days. I don't know how this happened, but you're here. It might have even been a sneaky little friend of yours that said, 'Hey -- do you wanna come out for five days? And we're gonna ride on boats and tubes!' and you're like, 'That sounds amazing!' And then you got to camp, and you got this weird dude Tyler preaching Jesus! Gotchoo! Gotchoo!"

What did God do in your life to bring you into relationship with Himself? Because something happens when you begin to believe that. When you start realizing to a deep, deep level that the God that created the universe had in His plan your name -- so, in all of the billions of people on this planet, God saw your face, and He was like, "I want you." Like -- don't think about everybody else for a second! It's okay in this moment to get a little selfish. God saw you and brought about an amazing plan so that you would come into relationship with Him and His church and live a life that would please Him. God did that. When you begin to think about that, what does that do in you?

Number one, if I remember my story, I automatically grow in trust of Him. I'm like, "You did that for me? I marvel at my parents. I marvel at my life. I marvel at this church. I don't deserve you!" But God's like, "I'm gonna give 'em to ya." What did God do? So, you grow in trust with Him automatically, and here's the second thing that happens to you. You begin to grow in affection for those that aren't in this relationship yet. If I truly am that touched and that changed by my relationship with Jesus, would it not make sense that I would tell everybody? This is what He has done for me, and it's what He's done for you, too. Because that begs the question -- if you're looking at this, you're like, "Well, what if I forget this? What if I don't pray this?" That's a good question. Peter tells you in 2 Peter. He says, "Those that forget this become near-sighted and blind, having forgotten that they have been cleansed from their past sins." When I forget that I was dead in my trespasses and my sins, if I forget that, then I start to forget that there are others that are still dead. When I remember the mountains that God moved to bring me to Himself, it begins to remind me there are others in my life that are still dead. And I am moved in affection for those people. If I remember what God did for me, I want to share that with other people. The danger, Christian, of not praying this for yourself is that we can start to get apathetic and really stop caring about those in our life that still need Jesus. So -- maybe for some of you God got you here tonight simply for me to tell you -- you need to stop listening to me right now and just begin praying, "Lord, I have absolutely stopped praying for those in my life that don't know Jesus. I have gotten lazy, I've gotten spiritually apathetic, and there are people who are dying and they're going to hell because I'm not getting off the couch. I'm not getting in the game." I'm not shaming you, but maybe you need to pray that for yourself.

Here's the second one. He says, "That you would know the riches of his inheritance in his people." Your Bible says, "...riches of his inheritance in his people," but when you look at the context, I don't think that he's talking about you and me as believers as his inheritance. That is true. God does inherit us into Heaven. But I think what he's saying is -- he says, "...the riches of God's inheritance for us." What's he talking about? It's Heaven. So -- the first thing that he prayerfully wants you to understand is the beginning of your story, and then he says, "Christian -- I want you to anticipate where you're going. So you, in this life, need to be praying, 'Lord, show me Heaven. Lord, bring into my mind heavenly spaces.'" Where is Christ? He's in Heaven, so if you're thinking about Jesus, you're thinking about Heaven, and you

need to understand this. How come he wants you to understand this inheritance? Because, for the believer, anticipation is a very powerful tool, especially if you're hurting. Anticipation for the believer is a very powerful tool, especially if you're hurting.

When you start looking at the idea of Heaven, you can -- I was reading in Hebrews chapter 11, and you and me in the Bible are given this list. Sometimes Christians call it the "Hall of Faith" -- it's our play on "Hall of Fame" because we're super creative. But we said, "this is the Hall of Faith. It's the list of ancient people that trusted God for what was coming next even though they never received what they were promised. So, here's what it says in verse 13, Hebrews chapter 11: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things that they were promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country -- a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city -- an eternal one." Here was the list -- Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. They all spend their lives thinking about what was next. All of them. And they are entered in as some of the most faithful people who have ever lived. Should you desire to be on that list, he says, "Pray about Heaven. Pray about Heaven."

John Piper tells a story about a preacher in the 1600s called Richard Baxter. Richard Baxter was a horribly physically broken man. Amazing man of God, but he was just broken. He would get gallstones and kidney stones and migraines, and he would just hurt every day, all day. At one point in his life -- he was a relatively young man, but he had a family and he had a lot of friends, but he got really, really, really sick, and he thought, "This is over." Like -- "It's done." So he brought all of his friends and family in, and he said his goodbyes, because he thought he was going to die that night. It was that bad. Miraculously, he recovers. And he writes about his experience in that moment, and it would later become a book called *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. And he said, "Here's what happened after that moment." He said, "I began to meditate on Heaven for 30 minutes every single day." So, a man who has not seen a day without pain his entire adult life says, "You want to know how I made it through? I meditated on Heaven every single day for 30 minutes." And here was his experience written out. He says, "If you want light and heat, why are you not more in the sunshine? Your soul craves Heaven, but right now your soul is not lit, and your sacrifice is cold. Fetch one coal daily from this altar and see if your offering will not burn. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if your affections will not remain warm."

Friends, I'm not asking you to hate this life. I don't think God is, either. But what He is saying is -- don't get accustomed to this. This is nothing. This is nothing. Here, your body dies. There, your body's brand new and doesn't hurt anymore. Here, your body gets sick; there, we don't even know what disease is. Here, we have miscarriages and children die. There, you have never -- no one has ever lost a relationship in Heaven, ever! And he says, "Think about that. I need your mind there," because if my mind is there, then I can endure a lot here. If your mind on Heaven, what does that say you believe about this life? If you are constantly looking at Heaven, what does that say you believe about this life?" It is temporary, and it's broken. And it's incomplete. It is inadequate. If anyone had a picture of the beach and they looked at it and they said, "This is the best," those of you that have been to the beach would say, "You are sadly mistaken. That's a picture." This -- everything that we experience -- I'm not shaming it, I'm not saying that it's all awful, but this is a shadow. The Christian has their mind set on another heavenly country, and he says, "Pray about this. You need to pray that you would understand this."

But that's not all. He says, "I want you to pray that you would better understand the hope that he's called you to, better understand the beginning of your story." He says, "I pray that you would understand the end of your story. But what's left? It's everything in the middle. What does the believer do to hold on to faith in the meantime? The beginning of your story is beautiful. The end is going to be wonderful. But what do you and me do every single day in the meantime? Paul has an answer. He says, "I pray that you would understand the power of God in your life." Now, can I just be honest with you? Before studying this, this was the most frustrating verse to me, because well-meaning Christians would say, not just to me but to other people, "The same power that rose Jesus from the dead is in you!" And you're like, "Cool! I don't know what that means!" The power that raised Jesus from the dead is in here? What do I

do with said information? It's confusing. It's oddly vague, it's theoretical, and John Piper said it actually sometimes seems like religious hype. And I would agree it can be frustrating. But why in the world does he want to pray this for you? Why should you pray this for yourself? It's a good question. Something devastating happens in you and me should we not remember the source of power in us and where it comes from. And I'll tell you what it is in a second, but it is faith-altering, faith-killing should you not remember what's in here. So, let's begin to describe this power. What is this?

Well, the first thing that he says about it is, it's something God used. It's God's. See, what I love about this is, when he says, "Remember your story. Remember Heaven" he gives it one line. When he describes the power of God, he spends three times the amount of space describing this. And he says, "First thing you need to understand is that what's in you is God's -- he used it." And this power does two things so that you might better understand what's in you. First thing that it did is that it rose Jesus from the dead. Now, that's amazing, and I'll explain more of it, but that should be enough. What's in you is the exact same spiritual force that raised Jesus from the dead. You might not know what to do with it, but that's in here.

Here's the second thing that it did. He said, after he raised him from the dead, this power seated him at the right hand of God, and more than that, took everything in this life that has ever existed and threw it under the feet of Jesus. Not only is this power one that raised him from the dead, but this is a power of position. This is a power of authority. John Piper went on this amazing rant in one of his lectures. He said, "Do you want to know what's under the feet of Jesus?" He said, "All of human history, all human beings, all demonic powers, disease, disability, all nature, weathers, hurricanes, lightning bolts, tornadoes, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, all business, industry, health care, sports, inventions, media, internet, military, governments, presidents, kings, chiefs, religions, universities, solar systems, stars, galaxies, molecules and atoms. Is that enough? All of that is under his feet." But he continues, as if that wasn't good enough. He said, "All these things -- anything you've ever lived through or experienced is under his feet." But why did God do that? Why did God put all of that under his feet? He says at the last part of these verses, he says, "He did it for the church. He did it for you." There's something that the believer needs to understand about power over death and power over authorities. See, not only are all of them under Jesus, but Jesus is the head of the church, and you and me submit to that King. So in the seat that you are sitting in, in this building, in any space that you inhabit, you, Christian, sit under the King that is over all things.

What does that mean for you? It means that there is no space, no realm, no dominion, no power, no authority, not even death that beats you. There's nothing off-limits for the church. Now, practically, what in the world does that mean? Here's the danger. If I start to forget what's in here -- the battery that sustains me -- if I start to forget that, I can begin to believe that there are realms untouchable by Jesus. I can begin to believe that there's a realm of my sin that Jesus can't touch. I can begin to believe that there's a family member so gone that Jesus can't reach them. If I don't remember that what's in me has dominance over all of known reality, then I can start to look at spaces in my life and say, "Jesus, you can't do anything about that." Here's the first thing that I want you to understand, just practically. Look at your family, your friends, your space of influence. Are there individuals in your life that you -- and don't, obviously, say this out loud, but just as you're thinking rhetorically, are there individuals that you have said in the past, "They're so gone, Jesus is never gonna get 'em"? I mean, be honest with yourself. I'll be honest. There are individuals in my life that I have thought, "There's no way."

You wanna know the first one? His name is Bob Bean. You can't make that name up. He was a guy that I rode the bus to school with every single day, and he would regularly pick me up out of my seat, begin to punch me and throw me on the floor. I was like -- there is no way that God wants this guy! He is cruel, and honestly, if I were to just be honest with all of you, I was like -- "If he goes to hell, kinda deserved." One day, one of my good friends was like, "We need to invite him to church." And I was like, "You're dumb. Um -- we're not doing that." She said, "No, I'm gonna ask him." I was like, "He's gonna say no!" And she's like, "Maybe he does." So she goes, "Bob, we're having a movie night tonight at Youth Group. Do you wanna come?" And Bob's like -- "Yeah." And I was like, "Dang it!" Bob comes to church and begins to hang out, and what we discover -- I'm gonna fast-forward the story -- what we discover is that Bob really didn't have any friends. I mean -- SHOCKER -- when you punch a bunch of people, they tend to not like you. But he had no friends. And he goes, "You are the first person that's ever invited me to

church." And so, one night we watched the *Passion of the Christ* -- and I don't care who you are, that movie will wreck you -- and it wrecked him. And he's like, "That's what Jesus did for me?" We're like, "Yup. Yup, it is. Do you want to follow that guy?" And he goes, "I do." And he became a believer, and he's now married and has three little kids that he's disciplining in the name of Jesus.

Who have you begun to think, there's NO WAY that they're ever gonna accept Jesus! Who told you that? Honestly, believer -- who tells us that? That is a level of deep selfishness and weakness that doesn't remember you're filled with the power of the resurrected Jesus. When you forget that, you look at people and go, "Lost cause." And Jesus goes, "I don't ever want you to be in that space, so you better pray that you remember you've got power in you." What's another realm that we just start to say "no" to God? We can say "no" to God when it comes to countries. We can look at geographic areas, political areas, and just go, "There's no way." If you were to imagine what country right now is having the most explosive growth of the gospel, what would you guess? Some of you might know the answer, if you're connected to the missions movement. What country right now is experiencing the most growth of Christians and churches in the world? It's Iran. It's Iran. Would anyone have -- like, even a few years ago, if we looked at the whole of the world, and we're like, what area might be hardest to get into? Muslim-dominated Iran. I would have easily said to anyone, there's no way that there's gonna be a huge gospel movement there. And God's like, "Watch me. Watch me." You wanna know who's leading that movement? It's dominantly women. Do you wanna know why? Because the Muslim faith looks at women and says, "You got nothing -- you got nothing to offer," and it's women leading one of the largest church explosions in all of Iran. Don't forget what power is in you, because God does not care who is leading the country. If whoever the leader of our country is begins to unnerve you, I would argue you're starting to forget what's in here. If you believe that there can be massive gospel movements when there's a certain leader but not another one, God's like, "You're forgetting what really matters. I don't care who's in the White House -- at all. I will move regardless of who's in the White House." When you remember what's in here, the realm of impossible ceases to exist.

Let me give you one more, and then we'll close. Look at gender, and look at the confusion that our culture has with gender right now. And ask a woman named Jackie Hill Perry if she believes in the power of God. If you don't know who this young lady is, she is an author and a speaker and a poet, and she wrote an amazing book called, *Gay Girl, Good God*. Now, don't let the title scare you -- here's why she picked it. When she identified as a lesbian woman, God was still good and reached her, and this book is the story of how she came out of those decisions and said, "Lord, I don't care what attraction is in here, I will submit my sexual ethic to you, whether I get married or not." Now, fast-forward to the end of the story. She is married, has three beautiful girls, and she's pregnant with a little boy right now. But when she looked at her life, she was sexually abused at a very young age, as happens often with individuals that move into the LGBTQ community. There's often abuse, and it was familial. And so, she basically decided at a very young age that, "If men do this, if this is what men do, I'm not safe with any of them. So, I'm safe with women." And so, an attraction began to grow for women, and she got her first girlfriend when she was in high school. But the whole time, what she didn't know was, she had a cousin that was praying, because her cousin doesn't see impossibilities with God. And she discovered that her cousin was praying this -- her cousin was saying, "Lord, would you show Jackie how much she needs you. Please show her how much she needs you." Jackie discovers this prayer, and a very short time later, her dad died, she was arrested for theft, and her relationships with friends and family were all imploding. And she goes, "Okay -- timeout -- Lord -- stop. My life is falling apart, and I think it's because my cousin's praying. Are you trying to get my attention?" And what she felt like God was saying was clearly, "Yes. Hi. Would you like to change your ways?"

She calls up her girlfriend one night and she says, "We're done." And her girlfriend goes, "Why?" And she says, "Well -- because I have to follow Jesus." And she goes, "That's a terrible decision!" And she goes, "Well, we'll find out later. But me and you are done." Now, the sexual attraction to women didn't go away. And that's where life gets really messy. She genuinely in that moment accepted Jesus, but the attraction didn't go away. So, what do you do with that? You submit it to Jesus. And she said these words -- she said, "If you're same-sex attracted and you want to fight that and push against that, the only chance you have is with the resurrection power of Jesus. That's it." The only way you say "yes" to a life of potential loneliness and singleness is for the gospel. It's with Jesus. In your pursuit of God, in your pursuit of

intimacy, in your pursuit of holiness, your pursuit of knowledge is absolutely crucial -- but remember, church -- your pursuit of knowledge is not simply intellectual. It's not simply just reading the Word. It's praying, "Lord, I need your help to do this. I need Jesus to follow Jesus." If we remember that, then in a few years, I hope that -- I mean, the church is always going to have problems, but I hope in a few short years, someone will be up on the stage saying, "You know what one of our problems isn't? Biblical illiteracy and spiritual understanding." So, let's pray that we would remember the beginning of our story, remember the end of our story, and remember the power that is available to you in the meantime.

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